



Study Guide for Teachers and Students

Student Matinee | March 26, 2026 | 11:00am

Marion Oliver McCaw Hall

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The March 26, 2026 student matinee of Momotaro is a narrated ballet featuring PNB School students. The performance will begin at 11:00am and will last approximately one hour with no intermission.

Photos © Angela Sterling and Lindsay Thomas, unless otherwise noted.

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




## Government Partners



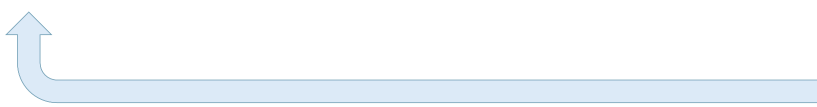
# Attending a Ballet Performance at McCaw Hall



- You may arrive at McCaw Hall on a bus , in a car , or by walking !
- McCaw Hall is at the Seattle Center, near the Space Needle.



© Alan Alabastro

- 
- When you enter McCaw Hall, you will be in the lobby.
  - Ushers will help your group find your seats inside the theater.
  - McCaw Hall is a big theater- nearly 3,000 seats! Everyone's view of the stage is a little bit different, but there isn't a bad seat in the house!

The sculpture hanging in the lobby is called "An Equal and Opposite Reaction" by Sarah Sze. She explains that the piece is "filled with the fantasy, imagination, and excitement of attending a performance." Look up at the sculpture as you enter McCaw Hall!

- 👁️ What do you see?
- ♥️ How does it make you feel?



These images come from Jessica Lang's *Let Me Mingle Tears with Thee* from PNB's 2022-23 season (L), and Kent Stowell's *Swan Lake* from PNB's 2023-24 season (R).

- 👁️ What differences do you notice in the dancers' costumes between the two images?
- 🧠 How might their costumes help tell a story?

- The lights in the audience will **dim** before the performance begins. The theater is **dark** during the ballet.
- This performance will have a narrator who will speak from the stage to help share the story of Momotaro. However, there will not be any talking during the dancing. The story is told through movement, facial expressions, music, costumes, and sets.
- In order for you and those around you to focus on enjoying the show, audience members do their best to sit with a calm body and quiet voice in their seats. However, you can clap when you enjoy something or laugh if something is funny to let the dancers know you appreciate their hard work.
- At the end of the performance, the dancers and musicians take a bow. This is a curtain call. You are welcome to clap and cheer to share your appreciation!

Going to the theater for ballet is similar to going to a movie:

- Photography and video recording are not allowed. 🚫
- Cell phones and electronics should be turned off when you enter the theater. 🚫  
Devices to support access needs are welcome to stay on. ✓
- There is no intermission. Use the restroom prior to the performance.

However, unlike the movies:

- Ballet is performed live. There are no second takes and dancers can react to the audience!
- Some people make their visit to the ballet a dress-up occasion; others dress casually. Wear something you are comfortable in so you can enjoy the performance.

Most Importantly: ENJOY AND HAVE FUN!

# About Pacific Northwest Ballet



Founded in 1972 and led since 2005 by Artistic Director Peter Boal, Pacific Northwest Ballet (PNB) is one of the largest ballet companies in the United States. PNB is also home to one of the United States' top ballet training schools—Pacific Northwest Ballet School.



PNB dancers are full-time professional artists. The Company has 48 dancers who dance over 100 performances each year at McCaw Hall in Seattle and on tour. The PNB Orchestra, consisting of over 60 professional musicians, accompanies many of these performances. PNB dances different types of ballets, including story ballets like *Cinderella*, as well as dances that are shorter, share ideas or feelings instead of telling stories, or are performed barefoot, in socks, or even in sneakers.



Founded in 1974, Pacific Northwest Ballet School, under the direction of Francaia Russell since 1977 and now under Mr. Boal's direction, is nationally recognized as setting the standard for rigorous ballet training and offers a complete professional curriculum to nearly 1,000 students at two locations-- Seattle and Bellevue.



PNB's Community Education Programs provide dance education in the greater Seattle area and reach approximately 15,000 adults and children each year through student matinees, in-school residencies, professional development for teachers, and other community-based programs.



# Dancers in Momotaro

While Pacific Northwest Ballet has a Company of 48 professional dancers whose job it is to rehearse and perform ballets at McCaw Hall, the dancers you will see in Momotaro are not professionals. They are students- kids and teenagers- at Pacific Northwest Ballet School!



[PNB School](#) offers a wide range of classes and programs, designed to be enjoyed by students ages two through adult. In Momotaro, you will see students from the Student Division through the Professional Division (approximately ages 10-20 years old) dancing a range of roles, developed to align with the dance training and skills they learn through weekly classes at PNB School. The students you will see on stage have typically studied ballet for anywhere from 2-15 years.

The older students are part of PNB School's Professional Division program which is designed to help students transition from student to professional dancer. In addition to rigorous classes focused on technique and developing artistry, Professional Division students receive career planning support, individual mentorship, and performance opportunities in Pacific Northwest Ballet productions, like Momotaro and The Nutcracker.

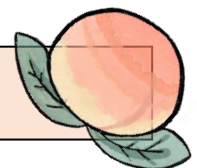
Jessica Lang, speaking about working with PNB School students while creating Momotaro, shared:

*I'm really excited to work with PNB School at all levels, from the tiny peaches to our Professional Division dancers. I hope to give them a good canvas of artistic nourishment, so that they go out into their professional career with something substantial that they've created. The students are excited, and their energy is great.*

## About Momotaro

Momotaro (The Peach Boy) is a narrated, hour-long performance featuring PNB School students. Momotaro was first written around the Edo period (1603-1868) but is thought to have been passed down for centuries before then, with many different versions emerging. PNB's world premiere version of Momotaro, adapted by Jessica Lang and Kanji Segawa, brings this captivating tale to the ballet stage with a focus on themes of courage, forgiveness, and the power of family and friends.

Jessica Lang & Kanji Segawa share about creating Momotaro on PNB's blog: <https://www.pnb.org/blog/jessica-lang-and-kanji-segawa-on-momotaro/>



# Meet the Artists



Kanji Segawa, Jessica Lang and Peter Boal in the PNB Studios, photo © Lindsay Thomas.

## Director and Choreographer: Jessica Lang

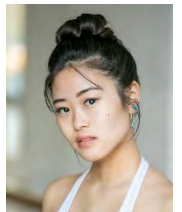
Jessica Lang is Resident Choreographer of PNB and Artist in Residence at Sarasota Ballet. She has created over 100 original works on dance and opera companies worldwide including American Ballet Theatre, San Francisco Opera, Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, PNB, Seattle Opera, The Royal Ballet, and her eponymous company Jessica Lang Dance. She is the recipient of a 2018 Martha Hill Mid-Career Award, the 2017 Arison Award, and a 2014 Bessie Award. Jessica Lang is originally from Bucks County, PA, and is a graduate of the Julliard School.

## Creative Associate and Dramaturg: Kanji Segawa

Kanji Segawa is from Kanagawa, Japan. In 1997, Segawa was awarded the Japanese Government Artist Fellowship to train at The Ailey School, and went on to perform with Ailey II, Battleworks, Mark Morris, and more. Since 1999, Segawa has been Creative Associate for Jessica Lang, assisting her creations for companies worldwide.

## Set Design Illustrator: Yuki Takahashi

Yuki Takahashi is from Tokyo, Japan. She studied at Ballet Academy of Texas, Mejia Ballet International, and PNB School. She joined PNB as an apprentice in 2019, was promoted to corps de ballet later that year, and to soloist in 2025.

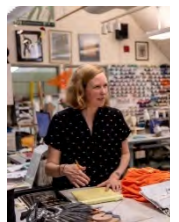


## Scenic Coordinator: Yuki Izumihara

Yuki Izumihara is an artist, graphic designer, and artist from Shimonoseki City, Japan, and based in Oakland, CA. She has recently designed projections and scenery for Cirque Musica, Opera Santa Barbara, Miami New Drama and more.

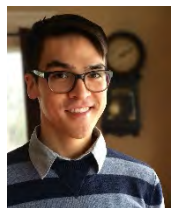
## Costume Design: Meleta Buckstaff

Meleta Buckstaff grew up in Jackson, Wyoming, and holds a BA in Dance and American Studies from Smith College and an MFA in Costume Design from the University of Washington. She joined the PNB costume shop in 2017 and in 2022 was promoted to Costume Shop Manager.



## Lighting Design: Reed Nakayama

Reed Nakayama moved to Seattle in 2003 to study at Cornish College of the Arts. He joined PNB in 2013 as a stagehand, and in 2019, was promoted to caretaker of the company's copious and diverse designs. He now holds the role of PNB's Resident Lighting Coordinator.



## Narrator: Brad Lo Walker

Seattle born and raised, Brad has performed with Taproot Theatre, Seattle Children's Theatre, Village Theatre, and The 5th Avenue Theatre's Educational Tour, among others. Brad directs school plays at BASIS Independent Bellevue and teaches with Studio East, Village Theatre, and Seattle Theatre Group.



# The Story of Momotaro

## Scene I

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A long time ago, there lived an old man おじいさん (Ojiisan) and an old woman おばあさん (Obaasan). They lived in a home near a stream in the country. They were kind, hardworking people, and they loved each other very much.

One day, Ojiisan went to chop wood in the mountains, and Obaasan went to wash clothes in the river. As Obaasan dipped the first garment into the river, a PEACH floated by. Then Obaasan saw another Peach—but this one was gigantic, as big as a small boat! She imagined a peach so large must taste delicious, so she decided to bring it home to share with Ojiisan.

Much to their surprise, this peach was so big because it housed a beautiful child inside of it! He emerged, shocking Ojiisan and Obaasan. But he assured them that there was no need to be afraid; he was sent from the heavens to be their child. They felt overjoyed, and they named their little peach boy MOMOTARO.

Ojiisan and Obaasan raised Momotaro to be strong and healthy, and to have a kind heart. He felt so grateful to them that he decided he must express his gratitude by embarking on a valiant adventure. Momotaro had heard of a place called Ogre Island, where terrible Ogres attacked people and stole their belongings. He vowed to go to Ogre Island so he could return the treasures stolen from his village.

Ojiisan and Obaasan helped him to prepare for his journey—Obaasan even prepared him his favorite snack きびだんご (Kibi Dango). The whole village cheered him on as he set off on his journey!

## Scenes II and III

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Momotaro began his journey, guided by wonderful FOREST FAIRIES. On his way, Momotaro encountered a sweet DOG. The Dog asked where Momotaro was going, and he explained his quest to Ogre Island. The Dog told Momotaro he would help him, if only Momotaro gave him a Kibi Dango from his bag. The pair set off together.

Then, Momotaro met a kind MONKEY, who had the same query as the dog. Momotaro gave the Monkey a Kibi Dango too, and the group continued on.

Finally, Momotaro met a handsome PHEASANT. Upon sharing a Kibi Dango, Momotaro now found himself accompanied by three new friends he'd met along the way. The quartet found themselves nearing Ogre Island, guided by the Stars and protected by the Sea.

## Scene IV

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On Ogre Island, the Ogres were dancing, playing with treasures, and eating food that had been stolen from Momotaro's village. Momotaro and his friends knew what they had to do—it was time for a battle.

Eventually, the Boss Ogre surrendered to Momotaro, apologizing for the harm the Ogres had caused and the treasures they had stolen. He felt truly sorry.

Ojiisan and Obaasan had taught Momotaro about the importance of forgiveness. Momotaro recognized the Boss Ogre's pain and remorse, and so he chose to forgive.

## Scene V

Momotaro and his friends journeyed back home, and Ojiisan, Obaasan, and the entire village was eagerly awaiting his return.

Momotaro called for everyone's attention as the Boss Ogre appeared. At first, the villagers were terrified! But the Boss Ogre was not there to cause harm. Instead, he presented the villagers with all of the treasures and delicacies the Ogres had stolen from them, and he expressed a sincere apology. The people accepted and welcomed him as a new member of the village family!

Ojiisan and Obaasan felt proud of Momotaro and celebrated his achievement of bringing peace and happiness back to the village. They all lived happily ever after. *THE END.*

## Who's Who?



**MOMOTARO:** Born from a peach, he later goes on a quest to Ogre Island with his animal friends.



**PEACH:** Seen by Obaasan floating in the river before she sees Momotaro's giant peach.



**FOREST FAIRIES:** Help to guide Momotaro on his journey to Ogre Island.



**DOG:** The first animal friend Momotaro encounters on his journey.

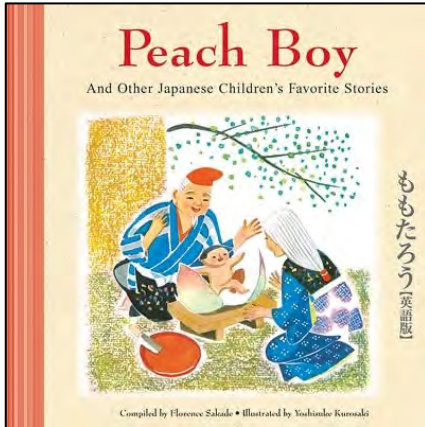


**MONKEY:** The second animal friend Momotaro encounters on his journey.



**PHEASANT:** The third and final animal friend Momotaro encounters on his journey.

# Read, Watch, Listen



Florence Sakade's book *Peach Boy And Other Japanese Children's Favorite Stories* provided the basis for PNB's adaptation of Momotaro. This compilation includes a plethora of other Japanese folktales to enjoy, with vibrant illustrations by Yoshisuke Kurosaki.

Purchase a Hard Copy: [Peach Boy And Other Japanese Children's Favorite Stories](#)  
ISBN: 9784805309964

JapanSocietyNYC created an animated video that tells the story of Momotaro in both Japanese and English.

Watch Here: [Momotaro the Peach Boy](#)  
URL: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=Lj8N934v28M](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Lj8N934v28M)



A great option for younger students, Super Why covered the story of Momotaro in a 25-minute episode.

Watch Here: [Super Why Full Episode: Momotaro the Peach Boy](#)  
URL: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=xLACCPbaEIM](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xLACCPbaEIM)

Listen to and learn the Japanese children's song, Momotaro, produced by Japanese Song Academy. (Tip: Turn on English closed captioning to learn how the song translates.)

Watch Here: [Momotaro Children's Song](#)  
URL: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=kOquWLxgYPM](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kOquWLxgYPM)



Listen to Tiernan Douieb tell the story of Momotaro on the Super Great Kids' Stories podcast.

Listen Here: [Momotaro \(Peach Boy\)](#)  
Or search "Super Great Kids' Stories Momotaro" wherever you get your podcasts!

# Taiko Drumming

PNB's Momotaro will feature live Taiko drumming. The word "Taiko" simply means "Drum", and traditional Taiko drums are large, wide, wooden instruments. Taiko drumming is an art form that has been around for over 12,000 years! Taiko drums have been used in religious ceremonies, in battles and wars, and to this day remain symbolic of Japanese arts and culture.

Taiko drumming is loud, strong, and powerful. When you witness Taiko drumming, you will hear booming drums and lively shouts, and you will see choreography that bears similarity to Japanese martial arts.

The Taiko drumming in PNB's Momotaro will be performed by students from the School of TAIKO, under the artistic direction of Ringtaro Tateishi.



Photo by Dzung Nguyen.

Ringtaro Tateishi is co-founder and artistic director at [The School of TAIKO](#) in Seattle. He began playing the Taiko at the age of 6 in Japan. From 1989 to 1999, he was a member of the world-famous Taiko group ONDEKOZA. As the group's artistic director, he gave over 1,000 performances in more than 25 countries. He has performed at major venues that include Carnegie Hall in NYC, the Suntory Hall in Tokyo, and the Taipei National Concert Hall. He also spent 7 years performing in Disney World's Epcot.



Listen to music from the album *Japanese Taiko* by Joji Hirota and the Taiko Drummers to hear the powerful rhythms of Taiko drums.

Listen Here: [Japanese Taiko](#)



Try it! Watch this video led by Taiko expert Tiffany Tamaribuchi, and follow along to learn some basic Taiko drumming beats.

Watch Here: [Taiko Drumming for Beginners](#)  
URL: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=-Qsa5JWs8f4](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-Qsa5JWs8f4)

# Recipe: きびだんご (Kibi Dango)

Try Momotaro's favorite snack, Kibi Dango (Millet Dumplings), with this recipe you can make at home!

## Ingredients:

- ★ - 1/3 cup takakibiko (millet flour)
- 3/4 teaspoon potato starch
- 1/4 cup boiling water
- ★ - 1/4 cup kinako (soybean flour)
- 1/4 cup brown sugar
- Pinch of salt

★Tip: [Town & Country Markets](#), a PNB partner, carries both millet and soybean flour!



1. In a medium bowl, whisk millet flour and potato starch to combine.
2. Add 1/4 cup boiling water.
3. Using a rubber spatula, mix until the dough almost comes together.
4. Use your hands to knead the dough into one solid mass.
5. Pinch off small pieces of dough, about 1/2 inch in diameter.
6. In a separate medium bowl, whisk together soybean flour, brown sugar, and salt.
7. Transfer to a shallow bowl.
8. Bring a medium pot of water to a boil over medium heat.
9. Add the Kibi Dango dough balls and continue to cook over medium-low heat until they float, then cook one minute longer.
10. Transfer the balls to a bowl using a slotted spoon or small fine mesh strainer.
11. Toss the Kibi Dango in the soybean mixture to coat.
12. For a traditional preparation, arrange the Kibi Dango in groups of three on small skewers or toothpicks.

To learn more, visit this [article](#) from Masterclass!

Did you know? "Dango" means "Dumpling", and there are many kinds of Dango you can make! Check out this [recipe](#) for Hanami Dango, by local blogger Mochi Mommy!

# Discussion Topics

## Movement:

Discussion:

Dance is a way to communicate stories, ideas, and feelings without using words. How can our bodies show feelings and ideas without talking or sounds?

Pre-Performance Questions:

- What kinds of movements might match emotions such as happiness, sadness, love, anger, or pride?
- Are these movements fast or slow? Sharp or smooth?
- How would you show a celebration? Something scary?

Post-Performance Questions:

- How did the choreography communicate the story and the characters' feelings?
- Give an example of something the dancers told the audience through movement. Show it with your own body!
- Are there any parts of the ballet that you have questions about?

## Costumes:

Discussion:

Costumes are important because they help identify the characters in the story. The audience can use costumes as clues to identify and learn about the characters. There are dozens of different costumes used in *Momotaro*, and each piece helps create a character and adds to the story's setting.

Pre-Performance Questions:

- What kinds of costumes do you expect to see in *Momotaro*?
- What kinds of materials do you think are used to make the costumes?

Post-Performance Questions:

- How long do you think it would take to make so many costumes?
- Think about the different costumes in *Momotaro*. How did they help tell the story?
- Which costumes looked easiest to dance in? The most difficult? Why?



Go Deeper!

Learn more about costumes at PNB in this video:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UfENmiltIAM&t=1s>

# Discussion Topics

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## Music:

### Discussion:

Since ballet does not involve talking while dancing, music is a very important part of the performance. In addition to music helping to tell the story and set the mood, dancers use it to remember their choreography and stay together with the musical beat while performing.

### Pre-Performance Questions:

- What kind of music tells you when something scary or exciting is happening in a movie?
- What kind of music do you expect to hear during Momotaro?
- How do you think music and dancing work together?

### Post-Performance Questions:

- How was the music different in each scene? The same?
- How did the music help to tell the story?
- Usually you do not see the musicians during a ballet. How did it feel to see the Taiko drummers performing alongside the dancers?
- If you were creating a ballet, would you prefer to pick a piece of music that was already composed, or one that was created specifically for your dance?

## Scenery and Lighting:

### Discussion:

The set for Momotaro includes painted backdrops, set pieces, dramatic lighting, and props. Designing all of those elements took many months!

### Pre-Performance Questions:

- What kinds of things would you expect to see onstage to show a home? A river? The forest?
- What kinds of considerations might scenic designers need to make for ballet?
- How could lighting change the mood on stage without changing anything else?

### Post-Performance Questions:

- What did the scenery look like? How many different settings can you remember from the story?
- How and why were the sets and lights different for each scene?
- Did the set design coordinate with the costume design?

# Additional Resources

## ABOUT PNB's MOMOTARO

Photos, program notes, and other behind-the-scenes information are available on PNB's website.

<https://www.pnb.org/season/momotaro/>

## SOCIAL NARRATIVE

Information about what to expect for attending a PNB Student Matinee at McCaw Hall.

<https://www.pnb.org/wp-content/uploads/2026/01/PNB-Student-Matinee-Social-Narrative-FY26.pdf>

## GET TO KNOW PNB- Photos, Videos, Behind-the-Scenes, and More!

YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/user/pacificnwballet/featured>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/PNBallet>

Blog: <https://www.pnb.org/blog/>

Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/pacificnorthwestballet/>  
[https://www.instagram.com/pnb\\_school/](https://www.instagram.com/pnb_school/)



This study guide was created by Pacific Northwest Ballet's Community Education staff for use by teachers and students attending the student matinee of Momotaro. Reproduction of this guide in its entirety is allowed and encouraged.  
For questions, contact [education@PNB.org](mailto:education@PNB.org) or 206.441.2432.

PNB Community Education programs are committed to serving all members of the community. We believe every child and adult has the ability and merit to dance. Programming is inclusive, regardless of race, national origin, disability status, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation, or gender.

[education@PNB.org](mailto:education@PNB.org) / 206.441.2432 / [www.PNB.org/community](http://www.PNB.org/community)